

POLS*2350*01: Law from a Political Science Perspective**Credit Weighting:** 0.5**Pre-/Co-Requisites:** 2.0 credits**Restrictions:****INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION****Name:** Andrew Mattan**Email:** amattan@uoguelph.ca**Office Location:** MCKN 506/507 (office hours virtual or by appointment)**GENERAL DETAILS**

This course examines law as both the outcome of political action and the structure within which political action occurs. Rather than treating law simply as a collection of legal rules, we will consider how law is created, interpreted, and applied, and how it affects both public and private actors. In doing so, the course will examine how politics shapes law and how law, in turn, shapes political institutions, public policy, and broader society.

The course begins by examining the relationship between law and politics, the sources of Canadian law, the structure of the Canadian legal system, and the nature of legal reasoning. Particular attention will be given to how courts use precedent and interpret legislation. Students will also learn how to find, read, summarise, cite, and apply judicial decisions and legislation using legal-research tools such as QuickLaw, CanLII, and HeinOnline. We will then examine several fields of Canadian law, including criminal, constitutional, administrative, contract, tort, and labour law. The course will conclude by considering lawyers and the legal profession before returning to the broader relationship between law, politics, and society. Throughout the course, judicial decisions and contemporary examples will be used to examine how legal principles operate in practice and how law affects public and private actors.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Explain the relationship between law, politics, political institutions, and power.
2. Identify and explain the principal sources of Canadian law, the structure of the Canadian legal system, and the roles of its major institutions and legal actors.
3. Explain the role of legal reasoning, precedent, and statutory interpretation in Canadian law and analyse how courts apply precedent and evaluate the legal, political, and/or policy significance of their decisions.
4. Identify and explain foundational legal concepts, including the rule of law and the distinctions between positive and natural law, common and civil law, and public and private law.
5. Find and properly cite judicial decisions and legislation using appropriate legal-research tools and read and summarise judicial decisions by identifying the facts of the case, legal issues, procedural history, outcome, and reasoning.
6. Identify, explain, and apply important legal concepts and legal reasoning from the fields of criminal, constitutional, administrative, contract, tort, and labour law.
7. Communicate ideas effectively in written work and in class, while engaging professionally and respectfully with differing perspectives. 🇩🇪

METHOD OF ASSESSMENT

SCC Case Brief: 15%
Citing References Exercise: 5%
Precedent Application Exercise: 20%
Statutory Research Exercise: 5%
Midterm Exam: 20%
Final Exam: 35%

REQUIRED READING

Baker, Dennis, and Byron Sheldrick. 2025. *Understanding Law for the Social Sciences*. 1st ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. Print: \$79.95; 180-day eBook: \$44.95.